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Letter dated 30 January 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to forward herewith a note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea in connection with the briefing to the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea by the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, which was held at the request of the Ethiopian delegation on 16 December 2016 (see annex).

I would be most grateful if the present letter and its annex were brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and circulated as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Amanuel **Giorgio**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 30 January 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Inappropriate submission regarding Eritrea to the Security Council by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development

1. At the request of Ethiopia, on 16 December 2016, the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) security sector programme presented a briefing to the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea.

2. The briefing was conducted in closed consultations, in an informal setting, on the multiplicity of serious transnational security threats in the IGAD region. The IGAD secretariat circulated, at an earlier date, a "confidential draft" on the subject matter to the Security Council with the caveat that the report included "preliminary findings only". We are told that the "full report is scheduled for April 2017".

3. In the "confidential draft", IGAD announced that, in April 2015, it had launched a "transitional security threats initiative to promote cooperation between Member States, as a first step towards the establishment of a regional transitional security threats initiative centre".

4. Eritrea welcomes the establishment of a transitional security threats initiative centre as well as its precursor, the IGAD Security Sector Programme. In 1994, when IGAD was revitalized and its remit broadened to include a robust framework of regional security cooperation to prevent and resolve intra-State and inter-State conflicts, Eritrea was an ardent advocate and proponent of this notion. Eritrea maintained then — as it does now — that the aspirations and associated architecture of regional economic cooperation will remain fragile and unsustainable until, and unless, Member States create effective mechanisms to prevent and resolve costly conflicts that may arise within and between them. Eritrea believes that the initiative can indeed constitute, under appropriate circumstances, a vital component of the toolbox of the envisioned mechanisms that the region has to chart out to deter turmoil and funnel its substantial capacity and endowments in the pursuit of national and/or regional economic development.

5. Unfortunately, these lofty objectives were, and remain, compromised owing to the short-sighted and harmful policies of the Ethiopian regime. In its dogged desire to "isolate" Eritrea, the Ethiopian regime continues to violate the fundamental tenets enshrined in the IGAD Charter to block the resumption of activities by Eritrea in the organization. Sadly, the rotating chairmanship of IGAD has been monopolized by Ethiopia since 2008 to serve this selfish purpose, in breach of the normative practices of the organization.

6. Under these anomalous circumstances, it is clear that the IGAD purview, and programmes in general, and the presumptuous contents and recommendations of the confidential draft in particular, cannot have any relevance or credence with regard to Eritrea. As a matter of fact, the section on Eritrea contains nothing other than Ethiopia's usual worn-out invective against the country, although it is packaged this time, rather disingenuously, in "IGAD" garb.

7. Operative paragraph 7 of the confidential draft states that the document was compiled by an "independent research and evidence team operating under the auspices of the security sector programme". This oblique clause conceals the fact that one of the principal entities involved in the preparation of the report is Sahan Research — an outfit founded and directed by Matt Bryden, the former Coordinator of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, who was later discharged from his duties by the United Nations under compromising circumstances. As is well known, Matt Bryden was the principal author of the fabricated 2009 report by the Monitoring Group which accused Eritrea of sending 2,000 troops to Somalia. This was the primary justification for imposing the sanctions under resolution 1907 (2009) on Eritrea. Ethiopia is thus trying to bring back on to the scene, through the back door, the discredited Matt Bryden in its desperate attempts to induce the extension of the unwarranted Security Council sanctions against Eritrea.

8. For all these reasons, Eritrea strongly objects to the submission and consideration of the confidential draft by the Security Council, even in an informal setting.

9. The substantive section on Eritrea in the draft report is replete with gross misrepresentations of facts and events. While they assert, in several operative paragraphs of the draft report, that the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and Al-Shabaab have "tense and hostile ties ... given their divergent ideological perspectives", the authors bend over backwards to insinuate Eritrean "proxy support to Al-Shabaab using the ONLF as a conduit". The desperate ploy is transparent indeed. The Monitoring Group has established, for four years in a row, that there is no support, or any links whatsoever, between Eritrea and Al-Shabaab. Ethiopia's primary motive for commissioning and submitting, at this point in time, the confidential draft to the Security Council under the convenient umbrella of IGAD is thus to cast aspersions on this indelible truth.

10. The confidential draft describes activities and operational modalities of several armed Ethiopian opposition movements. It then proceeds to dub "some of them", without specifying which ones, "terrorist organizations" simply because "that is how they are seen by Ethiopia". This is despite its admission, in the same breath, that "they are not designated as such by the United Nations". The authors of the draft report do not apparently know, or they have deliberately ignored, the fact that most, or all, of these groups were coalition partners with the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front party both during the armed struggle against the Mengistu regime and in the subsequent transitional Government that they all set up in the aftermath of the fall of the latter.

11. The worst part in this sloppy depiction is the outrageous attempt to associate Eritrea with "the provision of improvised explosive devices" that these groups reportedly employ in their military operations. To dramatize this point, the authors stress that "Eritrea's propagation of this expertise is therefore of serious concern to the region". As explained above, literally all of these groups were former comrades-in-arms of the regime in Ethiopia in earlier times. These devices and other methods of warfare are, in fact, their stock-in-trade. To gloss over these realities in order to weave trumped-up charges against Eritrea underscores the ineptness of the authors of the document, as well as the inveterate malice of the Ethiopian regime, which has used, and is using, unscrupulously, the IGAD forum to advance its sinister agenda against Eritrea.

12. The draft report has a full chapter on Ethiopia. In this chapter, it talks about purported military and/or terrorist threats that Ethiopia faces, but it does not probe or discuss Ethiopia's sponsorship of, or involvement in, acts of destabilization against its neighbours. Ethiopia supports several subversive and terrorist organizations against Eritrea, including the Al-Qaida-trained Eritrean Islamic Jihad and other armed groups, such as the Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization, the Kunama Liberation Front and the Saho Liberation Front. Several of these groups routinely issue press releases and communiqués from Ethiopia on subversive or terrorist acts conducted against soft targets in Eritrea from their military bases in Ethiopia. There is no reference to these matters in the draft report on "transnational terrorist threats" in the region. Equally important, the draft report is silent on Ethiopia's continued occupation of sovereign Eritrean territories in violation of international law, its pronounced policy of "regime change" in Eritrea and the periodic acts of aggression that it commits against Eritrea in spite of their grave ramifications for regional peace and security.

13. Operative paragraph 8 of the draft report states that the "team personnel worked in close consultations with government officials from concerned Member States". It further reveals that "with the knowledge and consent of Member States, team members travelled to Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia". The report even talks about the travel of one member of the team to Tanzania although the latter is not, and has never been, a member of IGAD. The team did not, however, travel to Eritrea, although a full and invective chapter of its report is dedicated to it. This act alone speaks volumes about the credibility, impartiality, objectivity and professionalism of the team and its work.

14. Not satisfied with all these hollow accusations against Eritrea, the draft report dedicates three operative paragraphs to Eritrea's presumed "violations of the Security Council arms embargo". However, this is not within its purview, as there is a full-fledged Council Security body, the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, tasked with carrying out this job. Still, the draft report recycles a spurious story and cites the interdiction by a French naval vessel, on 20 March 2016, of a "stateless dhow in the Indian Ocean carrying a significant quantity of weapons, including 2,000 Kalashnikov-pattern assault rifles, sniper rifles and general purpose machine-guns and anti-tank guided missiles". The draft report then states that "the French authorities assessed that the weapons originated in Iran and were likely destined, via Eritrea for Somalia and/or Yemen ... If so, the shipment constituted a potential violation of resolution 1907 (2009)". How is Eritrea responsible for arms that originate from Iran that may be destined for Yemen or Somalia? This is too trite to merit any response and only underscores the fallacy and nefarious motive of the whole report.

15. In conclusion, Eritrea has been the victim, in recent years, of repeated trumped-up charges and falsified reports by hand-picked "expert groups" to advance the political agenda of harassment of certain Powers. This unwarranted witch-hunting of Eritrea has to end once and for all and Eritrea urges members of the Security Council to terminate the sanctions regime.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
27 January 2017
Asmara